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ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to aid school officials in developing recruitment and selection procedures that fit local needs for hiring new teachers and administrators. The authors outline two basic recruitment and selection plans--one for teaching positions and one for administrative positions. Although these suggestions are designed for school districts large enough to have a full-time personnel administrator, minor modifications would make them applicable to smaller districts as well. (Author/JG)

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OSSC BULLETIN

HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR DECISIONS— THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF EDUCATORS

by

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PREFACE

Aside from the cost of new construction, one of the largest single expenditures a school district can make is the employment of a new teacher who qualifies for tenure. This can be a contractual obligation of half a million dollars or more that is amortized over a 30 to 40 year period.

For example, a teacher employed from age 25 to 65 would only have to make $10,625.00 a year plus 15% payroll costs to represent a half-million-dollar investment. A teacher employed at age 25 and retiring at age 55 would only need to average $14,166.00 a year plus 15% payroll costs to represent a half-million-dollar investment. It is only necessary for an administrator to average $24,285.00 plus 15% payroll assessments to represent a one million-dollar investment between the ages of 25 and 60.

There are excellent, good, fair and poor applicants in every profession. No school district can afford superficial practices in the selection of its staff. Major employment blunders can result from hasty personnel decisions. Public funds are gambled away when the best candidates available are not selected. Worse yet, children are the losers because they can suffer irretrievable damage if deprived of the best teachers available.

School boards may well look on those charged with the recruitment and selection of educators as purchasing agents making half-million-dollar expenditure recommendations with each employment proposal. Therefore, it is penny wise and pound foolish for a school district to cut back on the time or effort invested in the selection of educators.

The article which follows was taken from material prepared by the authors for the Handbook on Contemporary Education, published in 1976 by R. R. Bowker Co. (a Xerox Education Company) at 1180 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036.

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HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR DECISIONS--
THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF EDUCATORS

Introduction

In this Bulletin, the term recruitment will be used to describe activities designed to attract the quality and quantity of personnel necessary to fill the teaching and administrative vacancies in a school district. Selection will be used to designate activities designed to choose the best candidates from those recruited.

While the great number of candidates for positions in education may make recruiting appear to be less necessary, recruiting as related to the selection process continues to be important in educational administration. Simply put, the better, more careful recruiting one does, the better chances there are in the selection process of finding quality candidates. The selection process itself is becoming more and more significant. The competency of the superintendent or personnel administrator at one time was measured by whether all vacancies were filled; now his competency is evaluated on the quality of his choices from the candidates available. The superintendent or personnel administrator, today, must be accountable for hiring errors which formerly might have been excused by a shortage of qualified candidates.

This Bulletin outlines two recruitment and selection plans--one designed to provide the best candidates for teaching positions, and the other, for administrative positions. While the suggestions given are designed for districts large enough to have a full-time personnel administrator, minor modifications would make them applicable to districts in which the building administrator or the superintendent is personally responsible for all recruitment and selection activities.

Recruitment and Selection of Teachers

The first step in developing a recruiting plan is to analyze the needs of the district. Because so many of the best beginning teachers are hired early in the spring and are unavailable later, a needs analysis must be completed before most vacancies are known. Therefore, early assessment should be made of how many new teachers will be needed in a district. Both the few positions known to be vacant plus a prediction of expected vacancies must be considered. Predictions can be based on: anonymous questionnaires to teachers in which they are asked to state the probability of their returning; predictions by building administrators and department heads; and district enrollment forecasts. Analysis of this data should predict the probable number of vacancies which will occur in various subjects and grade levels, and with this information it can be estimated how many candidates must be selected.

After this district analysis has been made, building principals should provide the superintendent or personnel administrator with two types of position guides (or job descriptions). The first should be a detailed position analysis for each position already known to be vacant--detailed to the extent that the recruiting team can look for and employ specific candidates. This position analysis must include any special subject matter or methodology needed for the position plus any co-curricular activity which the teacher must direct. A second, less detailed position analysis also should be prepared which outlines general teacher qualities needed when anticipated vacancies occur. Both of these descriptions will assist the superintendent or personnel administrator in designing interview forms, and instruct the recruiter(s) regarding special employment needs.

The next task in completing a recruitment plan is to identify sources of prospective candidates to fill the vacancies. An often overlooked source consists of teachers in the district who have asked for reassignment or whose reassignment is requested by their supervisors. Consideration of such requests results in more effective placement of teachers, and therefore, higher staff morale. Another source consists of employees who are on leave of absence and have requested assignments.

The major source of candidates for most districts is the new college graduate in education. Traditionally, school

districts have asked interested graduating seniors to sign up for personal interviews. However, the larger number of education graduates who may sign up often is too great in relation to the number of vacancies normally available; thus, this plan may prove too costly both for districts and candidates.

A more up-to-date plan (designed by Dr. Forest Gathercoal of Oregon State University) features a group information session to which all candidates interested in a particular district are invited. This session is commonly held on campuses of colleges of education. A sufficient number of district staff members (who have been selected as recruiters) are sent to accommodate all interested candidates. A sign-up system is unnecessary and no candidates are turned away. Several group meetings may be held throughout the day to accommodate class schedules of the students as well as interested teachers from neighboring districts. At these group meetings the recruiters answer students' questions and discuss the district and its needs. Greater credibility in the sessions can be gained by having teachers from the district available to describe the working conditions of the district, and to answer candidates' questions.

Those students interested in pursuing employment are asked to complete a preliminary application and leave it with the district recruiter. This application, together with the candidate's placement file, is examined by the recruiter, and

a decision is made the same day as to whether the probability of employment for the candidate justifies a personal interview. If so, the placement office contacts that candidate by phone to schedule a later indepth interview. If there is little or no interest in the candidate, the district's personnel office writes and explains that a personal interview would not be profitable. Early use and evaluation of this plan indicates that students and recruiter feel it more desirable than the more traditional program.

Another source of candidates consists of teachers in other school districts. The most effective way to interest these teachers is to build exemplary working conditions so that local staff members voluntarily encourage their friends, who may be teaching elsewhere, to apply. A well-designed recruitment brochure can be widely distributed to inspire interest from many areas.

Teacher Recruitment Activities

Knowing the projected needs, the superintendent or personnel officer is able to begin the recruiting effort. He must select any recruiting aides, decide on the geographic extent of the effort and correspondence necessary to communicate with candidates.

The skill of the interviewers is one of the most crucial ingredients of a successful recruiting effort. Bolton (1970) suggests the following criteria for selection of the

interviewer:

- Alertness to cues
- Ability to make fine distinctions, perceive accurately
- Ability to make immediate and accurate records
- Willingness to use criteria established by the organization
- Ability to suppress biases

Bolton also emphasizes that in addition to selecting interviewers carefully, attention should be paid to providing them with training and practice.

In choosing members of the selection team it would be well to keep in mind the following conclusions from Bolton's research (1970):

- Training and experience of the decision maker influences his interpretation of information
- Ability to interpret data is not related to sex
- More accurate judgments are made by those who do not become emotionally involved or who are socially detached
- Use of multiple raters tends to improve prediction
- The selection decision is improved by using a single page summary document and by providing instructions on how to process information

Intensive recruiting activities will involve a minimum of three months, and requires concentrated effort by a number of district personnel. While some administrators work outside the district, others may interview local candidates. Recruitment activities conducted during college vacations

assure that college students soon to graduate in education may seek an interview. Saturday interviews assure that interested employed teachers can be scheduled (necessary if experienced teachers are needed). Districts adopting a complacent attitude because of the abundance of candidates often find that outstanding candidates will be hired by the aggressive districts before these candidates have time to contact the less aggressive "competitors."

Interview questions may be designed in such a way that comparisons can be made between candidates interviewed by different team members. A simple set of questions, or a structure as sophisticated as a subset of the Ryan Characteristics of Teachers (Ryans, 1960) may be formulated by the administrative team. Discussions of interview techniques and report forms can be found in texts on personnel administration which are included in the bibliography.

Upon completing the screening process, the superintendent's or personnel director's office should have applications, placement files, and interview reports for a number of preferred candidates. All candidates who have been eliminated from consideration should be so informed promptly--to allow them time to search for employment elsewhere. Those in the preferred files should be contacted periodically and informed of their status until they are hired or it is known they will not be needed.

Teacher Selection Procedures

A dilemma in some districts concerns who should make the final teacher selection. Technically, the school board does the hiring. In practice, however, the superintendent may delegate the nominating responsibility to the personnel office. The principal, if he is to become increasingly accountable for his building, should become more involved in selecting teachers. As specific vacancies in a particular school become known, the personnel administrator may refer one or more preferred candidates to the building administrator, from which he makes his recommendation. In some instances, the department chairmen seek involvement in the selection of teachers. In smaller districts, school board members may wish to involve themselves more in the selection process than in larger districts. However, most board members are in no way qualified by training or experience for the selection of teachers.

Even more important than who makes the final decision is how much time is spent on selection procedures by the various administrators. The superintendent or personnel officer is challenged to maintain a delicate balance between obtaining the best candidates while keeping time demands on administrators within reason. By carefully considering this "balance," most vacancies can be filled with the right persons, and well in advance of the new school year.

If, during the selection process, a candidate is hired who does not meet each requirement of the position, the superintendent or personnel officer should note the deficiencies and report them both to the principal and to the department responsible for staff development. Compensatory inservice training should be designed to increase that teacher's effectiveness. A competent personnel department is responsible not only for recruitment and selection, but for making every effort to see that each teacher in the district has opportunity to succeed.

Recruitment and Selection of Administrators

The following section deals specifically with the selection of new school superintendents. However, many of these recommendations apply equally well to the selection of principals and other school administrators.

Because today's administrators face tremendous pressures and heavy responsibilities, it is essential to allocate adequate time and resources to search out and hire the most competent school administrators available. Some school boards seem to feel that a new face from a great distance may be the best candidate. Others may feel that someone working alongside the former administrator would make the smoothest transition, and therefore, be a desirable candidate. Neither reasoning is necessarily sound. Indeed, if the top candidate

is thought to be available within the local district, it is unfair both to all applicants and their sponsors to go through the motions of an extensive search. However, if any doubts exist concerning the in-district applicant, a wide-open search is advisable. One study has found that the larger the area of search for a new superintendent, the greater the satisfaction of the school board with the new superintendent in subsequent years.

Next, a time schedule showing dates for the following major recruitment decisions and activities should be developed: a general search plan which includes qualifications desired, need for an advisor, compensation range, screening committee composition, geographical scope of search, type of vacancy announcement, and budget for the search; advertising of the vacancy, receipt of applications, completion of all files, screening of applicants, report to the board, disbanding of screening committee, establishment of interview schedule, visits to home districts of board finalists, offer of contract, notification of unsuccessful candidates and preparation of media announcements. This total process may require a minimum of four months.

There is a widely accepted statement to the effect that a school eventually reflects the nature of its principal. Similarly, a school superintendent has a strong effect on the potential progress or the perennial problems experienced by a

school district. Those skills which make one an excellent teacher, counselor, or coach are not identical to those which make an excellent administrator. It is essential to develop criteria according to district needs against which to measure prospective administrative candidates.

An early determination that must be made is whether the board will handle the selection process by itself or seek the assistance of an advisor. Because a thorough search takes both expertise and time, it is common practice for boards to choose a consultant to assist in securing the new superintendent. Such an advisor who may be a former superintendent and/or a professor of educational administration may help the board formulate criteria to be used in the selection process; contact important segments of the district to help assess the special needs and educational goals of the community; help outline contents of the recruitment brochure; advise on the composition and responsibilities of the screening committee; and assist with travel and interview suggestions when finalists are contacted.

Vacancy Announcement

Since only the most competent applicants are being sought and since such individuals are normally secure in their present positions, an attractive brochure may be necessary to arouse the interest of highly desirable

candiates. An administrative job description is basic to the preparation of this brochure. The announcement should also indicate the reason for the vacancy, the educational philosophy of the school district, the application deadline and planned date of the announcement of the appointment, the salary range, information to be required of the applicant, and the person to whom applications should be sent. A statement of required and desired qualifications, and a description of the school district and the community should be included.

Vacancy announcements or brochures may be distributed through county or intermediate school superintendents, university placement centers, key professors of educational administration, and state departments of education. The board's consultant will be aware of other helpful contacts for receiving names of outstanding applicants.

Screening of Applicants

Normally, a screening committee is appointed by the school board with assistance from its consultant. Some districts include both an administrative and a teacher representative on a screening committee. Each individual appointed by the school board must be completely trustworthy, should function as an individual and not as the representative of an organization, and be able to treat all information in a

professional and confidential manner. Otherwise, it is safer to appoint a screening committee of professionals from outside the district, such as two school superintendents, a representative of the state department of education, a university representative with qualifying experience in public school administration, and one reliable community member (such as a former school board chairman) who is highly respected. In the interest of efficient screening, it is preferable to have a relatively small number of screening committee members--all highly qualified.

When selecting administrators other than superintendents, the screening committee usually consists of local district staff members. Their screening of final candidates becomes a recommendation to the superintendent who must initiate the final employment recommendation to the school board.

The screening committee should have an early meeting with the school board to explore the special attributes board members feel are necessary for the successful candidate. For example, does the board prefer a young candidate with less experience but very high potential, or a candidate with considerable experience regardless of age? The screening committee also may meet with organizational representatives who will give their input prior to the screening process.

The school board's consultant coordinates the work of the screening committee as it reduces the number of applicants

to the board's requested five or so finalists. This committee should carefully review all confidential papers and application material on each candidate, share information known about various candidates, and make all the telephone calls necessary to narrow the field of those considered to be semi-finalists. It is helpful if the screening committee prepares a written one-page summary based on phone contacts on each finalist recommended to the board.

The screening committee report is submitted to the board in executive session. This report should explain why certain candidates have been recommended and answer any board questions about other applicants. The screening committee members must understand that the committee is officially disbanded once its report has been presented to the school board.

Screening of Finalists

When superintendent candidates have been selected for board interview, one board member or a selected district staff member is designated as host to meet each visiting candidate and give him a tour of the district. Each candidate should be accorded the same length of visit--a minimum of one-half day and an evening. The consultant may be asked to suggest questions that might be asked of all candidates.

The local school board should pay all travel and subsistence costs involved in bringing a candidate to the

community for an interview. The only exception to this practice may be an advance agreement with each finalist that these expenses will be paid unless the position is offered and turned down by the candidate. This practice may insure that only serious candidates will accept the board's invitation for an on-site visit and interview.

After the school board reduces the number of finalists to one or two candidates, it should arrange for a visitation by a board representative(s) to the candidates' home communities to interview such persons as school board members, the mayor, city manager, ministers, teachers association officers, a banker, and PTA officers--to learn more about the candidate. While interviewing these community leaders, the reputation of the local candidate must be safeguarded; it is helpful to remind those being interviewed that other excellent individuals are under consideration so the local candidate will not be embarrassed if unsuccessful. Questions asked the community leaders should include: "Is the candidate able to make sound decisions?" "Are board policies carried out with sincerity?" "What is the quality of staff morale?" "Is the administrator ethical in all of his contacts?" "Does he bring full information in well-prepared form to the board?" "Are his personal traits appropriate for this type of position?" Also, to learn more about the candidate, it is important to meet with him and his wife sometime during this visitation.

After the board has agreed on a finalist, he may be brought to the school district again to discuss salary and related matters. The new superintendent may also be interviewed by the press, and simultaneous announcements should be made in the home community and the employing community.

Unsuccessful Applicants

A major complaint of unsuccessful candidates is that they seldom hear anything as to the status of their application. Once consideration has been narrowed to several finalists, a letter should go to all other applicants thanking them for their interest and telling them they are no longer in contention. Finalists not selected for the position also should receive a personal letter from the board chairman thanking them for their participation, recognizing that they became finalists and indicating that an announcement of the board's final selection will be made within a few days.

Summary

This Bulletin has emphasized the continuing importance of the recruitment function for teachers and educational administrators, and has presented ideas useful to the reader in developing selection procedures to fit local needs.

A district must be concerned not only with the development of a selection process but with the evaluation of that

process. This evaluation must not only be well planned but must be a continuing process. Bolton (1970) states, "The implication of research findings and advice from measurement specialists is that any measure of success of a selection process is likely to be only temporary. This means that the value of the procedure should be checked periodically."

Whatever system the reader develops, concern for the welfare of the unsuccessful candidates should not be overlooked. A well-planned, well-administered selection program will not only provide excellent teachers and leaders for youth, but will add materially to a district's reputation.

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